Noodles Around the World

In China, people put soy sauce on me. In Italy, they put tomato sauce on me. In the United States, they put cheese on me. What am I? I'm a noodle!

Thousands of years ago, people ground grains and mixed them with water. The food they made was tasty. Plus, it could be dried and stored. When food was needed, it could be boiled and safely eaten. Noodles were a very useful invention.

In some countries, noodles are made from rice flour. In others, wheat flour is used. Noodles can also be made with soy flour and corn flour.

The English word *noodle* came from the German word *Nudel.* But many of the noodles we eat in the United States are called by the Italian word for noodles, which is *pasta. Pasta* means "paste" in Italian.

When you hear the word *spaghetti,* you probably think of long, thin noodles. In Italian, the word *spaghetti* means "thin strings or cords." In fact, the Italian words for most kinds of pasta describe their shape. Another name for some kinds of pasta is *macaroni.* In Italian, *macaroni* means "broken," which describes the small shapes of the pasta.

Noodles have long been part of the diet of the people in China, too. The oldest known noodles were found in 2005 in northwest China. Scientists believe that they were made about 4,000 years ago.

Although Italian pasta can be long or short, Asian noodles are most often served long. In China, long noodles are a sign of a long life. The Chinese call noodles made from wheat *mein.* When this kind of noodle is combined with other food, it might have a name like *chow mein,* which means "fried flour." When the noodle is made of rice, it is called *fen* or *fun.*

People around the world love to eat noodles in many shapes and sizes. They're easy to cook and delicious with many sauces. What's your favorite kind of noodle?